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ABSTRACT

Psychological testing has played a major role in the American Psychological Association (APA) because testing and assessment are important aspects of what psychologists do; tests assist psychologists in diagnosis and treatment. From its earliest years, APA has had one or more committees concerned with testing. The present Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessment (CPTA) has played an important part in developing standards for various kinds of psychological tests. The nine-member CPTA is the only committee reporting to more than one parent board at the APA. APA recognizes the importance of testing to the public and has been instrumental in the development of the "Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests." APA sponsored the meeting from which the Joint Committee on Testing Practices (JCTP) grew. The JCTP is a means by which test publishers and professional organizations can work together to improve the use of tests in assessment and appraisal. While APA will continue to provide staff support, JCTP will better represent all testing professionals by not being dependent on any one group. The JCTP can take on projects to benefit all parties in testing, while remaining free of the controversial policy and psychometric issues APA must consider. (SLD)

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APA's Role in Fostering Good Testing Practices

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of the American Psychological Association
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APA's History in Testing

For a number of reasons it seems particularly appropriate at this convention to take a brief look back upon the place testing has had within the American Psychological Association (APA) during its history. Psychological testing has played a major role in APA because testing and assessment are important aspects of what psychologists do. Practioners are concerned with testing because they use tests as tools to assist in diagnosis and treatment. Scientists are concerned with developing tests that can accurately measure various constructs such as achievement, intelligence and performance. The public is concerned with testing because tests have important implications on their lives.

In 1992, the American Psychological Association will be celebrating its 100th birthday. It was in July of 1892 that G. Stanley Hall held a meeting of seven psychologists to organize APA (Goodstein, 1988). It is significant to note that less than three years later, in 1895, the first testing committee was appointed in APA.

The testing committee was a part of APA many years before APA established similar boards concerning science policy, professional practice, or public interest. This first testing committee was called the Committee on Physical and Mental Tests and was given the charge to consider the feasibility of cooperation among the various nationally located psychological laboratories in the collection of mental and physical statistics. In all, not too different that the charge of this Joint Committee on Testing Practices. The first committee was comprised of Joseph Jastrow, E.C. Sanford, Lightner Witmer and J. McKeen Cattell as chair. The committee collected data on physical and mental tests that were appropriate for use with college students, the general public, and school children. In evaluating tests, they considered criteria such as ease and quickness of administration, interpretability, ability to reveal individual developmental differences and test construction. Committee members engaged in individual research on the tests and produced a final report at the 1897 APA meeting (Singleton, 1976).

From 1906 until 1914, APA appointed a committee to investigate aparatus, methods of investigation, and treatment of results for: tests of association, gross motor, pitch discrimination, and color vision in animal psychology. The committee was given the additional charge of evaluating the relative merit of different kinds of apparatus as developed and attained standing committee status in 1914 as the Committee on Standardization of Mental Measurements and Tests.

Even in 1915, psychologists were concerned with testing abuses. One of the first resolutions passed by APA stated "Be it resolved, that this Association discourages the use of mental tests for practical psychological diagnosis by <u>individuals psychologically unqualified for this work.</u>"

From 1937 through today, with the exception of a few years during World War II, there has existed one or more testing and assessment committees at APA. During that 1930's through the 1960's committee activities included:

- o development of "Ethical Standards for the Distribution of Psychological Tests and Diagnostic Aids.
- o development of a short manual on test item construction and validity.
- o review and evaluation of group mental testing used by the military.
- o publication in 1954, of the first Technical Recommendations for Psychological Tests and Diagnostic Recommendations.
- o liaison with AERA and NCME in developing Technical Recommendations for Achievement Testing.
- o discussions and statements on enforcement of the Technical Recommendations, copyrighted test materials, and other ethical concerns.
- o publication of a revised Test Standards in 1966, with AERA and NCME.
- o publication of a special issue of the American Psychologist on testing.

By the late 1950's the Committee on Psychological Tests was firmly a part of the APA governance process and activities progressed to developing testing policy, reviewing testing practices, participating in amicus briefs, and cooperating with other APA boards and committees. In 1957, the Committee was subsumed under the newly developed Board of Scientific Affairs (BSA). In 1963, APA founded another testing committee, the Committee on Psychological Assessment, that reported to the Board of Professional Affairs. In 1971 the two committees merged into the present Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessment (CPTA).

CPTA has been instrumental in two subsequent revisions to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests (1974, 1985), formation of the International Test Commission (1971), and development of APA policy in such areas as: Griggs v. Duke Power Company (1971), Guidelines on Sex Bias (1974), "Uniform Guidelines on Employment Selection Procedures (1974, 1985)", continuation of the "Mental Measurements Yearbook (1974-76)", information contained in test manuals (1976), enforcement of the Standards (1979), truth in testing legislation (1979-1985, 1988), amicus briefs in Detroit Edison v. National Labor Relations Board (1980), testing children with special learning needs (1984-1988), and Guidelines for Computer-Based Tests and Interpretation (1986).

In the nine months that I have been involved with CPTA they have completed a policy statement, approved by the Council of Representatives this week, on the Golden Rule Insurance Company Settlement, developed a reply to the report by John Cannell on achievement testing with elementary students, provided legislative support and technical assistance needed to win passage of federal legislation restricting polygraph testing, establishing a dialogue with publishers of paper and pencil honesty tests in order to assure that testing procedures adhere to the Standards and APA's

Ethical Principles, and of course, continued support and involvement with the activities of this Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

Association Governance

At APA, as well as the other four sponsoring associations of JCTP, there are numerous governance bodies and procedures that are in place for testing policies and projects. In 1985, CPTA was reconstituted and expanded to a nine-member committee to better reflect the views and concerns of the entire association. CPTA remains housed in the Science Directorate, reporting to the Board of Scientific Affairs. However, because of the sensitivity of the issues and potential implications of testing policies and programs, CPTA is the only committee reporting to more than one board at APA. In addition to the Board of Scientific Affairs, CPTA has representation from and reports to the Board of Professional Affairs, in the Practice Directorate; the Board of Ethnic and Minority Affairs and the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology in the Public Interest Directorate. In its recent history, CPTA has had quite a challenge in balancing scientific evidence, public policy concerns, and implications on the practice of psychological testing in discussing issues such as the Larry P. case, Uniform Guidelines, and the Golden Rule Settlement. In many instances, CPTA has been successful in arriving at a workable agreement and consensus on such issues, while other issues have gone unresolved.

CPTA policies and recommendations are forwarded to all four parent boards for review and approval, prior to submission to the Board of Directors and APA's Council of Representatives. To further complicate the process, additional committees within APA may be involved in the development or review of policies. CPTA's statement on the Golden Rule Settlement required two years and three major revisions. Testing issues affect many divergent groups who may be primarily concerned with education, policy issues, employment, science, or other areas. For example, CPTA has collaborated on specific areas of testing with the Committee on Professional Standards; the Committee on Disabilities and Handicaps; the Committee on Children, Youth, and Families; the Ethics Committee; and the Task Force on Psychology in the Schools.

Testing and the Public

Testing affects the general public. Annually, over 40 million standardized tests are administered that assist in determining who will or will not (1) gain admission to colleges, universities, and graduate schools; (2) become a teacher, police officer, lawyer, insurance salesman, or licensed psychologist; (3) be promoted to the next grade in elementary or high schools; and (4) be the recipient of scholarships or awards. The recent rush to testing in education has been a general by-product of the public's desire for greater accountability. However, testing is also on the rise in employment and professional areas for reasons of greater accountability, increased productivity, and proof of competency.

The American Psychological Association recognizes the importance of these goals and has maintained that properly developed and validated tests

represent one of the most important contributions of behavioral science to our society. Testing and assessment have provided fundamental and significant improvements over previous practices in industry, government, and education (APA, 1985). APA also realizes that testing has also been the target of extensive scrutiny, and debate because of many unintended, but nonetheless damaging consequences. The public scrutiny and debate help us as testing professionals better focus on the importance placed on tests in today's society and our responsibility in the proper development of tests and our responsibility for how these tests are used.

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests, are the most widely recognized contribution by APA, AERA, and NCME to fulfill these responsibilities. Continued activity by APA in federal and state legislative areas and involvement as an amicia in landmark court cases are other visible efforts to fulfill these responsibilities.

APA's Involvement with the Joint Committee on Testing Practices

During the summer and fall of 1984, efforts by a handful of individuals, some present today, resulted in the formation of The Joint Committee on Testing Practices (JCTP), yet another effort to fulfill responsibilities of testing professionals. In July, 1984, APA sponsored a meeting bringing together test user organizations and twenty-five test publishers and software developers. A proposal for developing a forum, eventually called JCTP, was drafted and approved by APA, AERA, and NCME. It is interesting, in retrospect, to review the comments made by APA boards and committees as they discussed approval of JCTP in 1984. One board questioned the advisability of the forum, noting "some will question the propriety of APA and the testing companies being enjoined in an effort which would result in de facto regulation of the companies." Other groups felt APA might lose its independence as a critic of test misuse. Yet most boards and committees enthusiastically supported the establishment of this Joint Committee and quickly forwarded nominees who might best represent their own perspectives on testing.

Last year at this convention, JCTP was expanded to include the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) and the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD). A revised charge was approved noting that "JCTP provides a means by which professional organizations and test publishers can work together to improve the use of tests in assessment and appraisal. The goal is to work together cooperatively to advance, in the public interest, the quality of testing practices (JCTP, 1987)." At this convention, JCTP is at a turning point. The two projects that have largely consumed the Joint Committee since its inception have been completed and near distribution. During these initial years, APA was a prime mover in directing the projects considered by JCTP, providing financial/administrative support, and hosting meetings. Now, JCTP is moving toward fulfilling its role as a true inter-association body.

Recently, JCTP has developed stronger guidelines to assure that projects and tasks share a common interest across professional associations. Funding and administrative details for JCTP, as well as, future working groups that will be approved, will be shared by all associations and test publishers. APA will continue to provide staff support for JCTP and the working groups, however, JCTP will better represent all testing professionals by not being totally dependent on any one group. ASHA has already provided great assistance through sponsoring a second test publisher's conference and an inter-professional association forum in the past year.

JCTP is considering several future projects that would serve the public interest in improving the quality of testing. Developing a Code of Fair Testing Practices in additional areas such as clinical or personality testing is one potential project. Extending the findings from the Test User Qualifications research project to training of test users represents another effort that has been a long standing concern of the profession. Finally, a proposal to better inform the general public about testing, its uses and limitations, is a final project under consideration.

APA's committees and boards must often take on complex and controversial testing issues that are difficult to separate science from policy - or politics. In contrast, JCTP has managed to take on initiatives that benefit all parties involved in testing, while avoiding the very controversial policy or psychometric issues that could disrupt the fragile inter-organization alliance. There is a need for both types of bodies within a professional association, such as APA and other sponsors of JCTP. The continued successful operation of an inter-professional group dictates that they gravitate to those areas that all parties can agree upon while avoiding guild issues or areas of disagreement. JCTP is continuing to be inclusionary and reach out to other professional associations, test publishers, and organizations involved in testing. JCTP activities have required modest committments of time and support from its sponsors and test publishers, but its efforts should be beneficial to all involved parties and the general public.

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